

ENERGY: Driving like it's 1999: Californians used least gas in 2011 since 20th century

By Eric Wolff

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Californians burned 14.6 billion gallons of gasoline in 2011, the fewest gallons since 1999, a state tax board said Friday.

Californians' gas use ramped up every year between 1992 and 2005, when gas use peaked at 15.9 billion gallons, according to the California Board of Equalization, which tracks gas use via sales taxes. In 2011, as gas prices skyrocketed 23 percent and the economy languished, gas use fell 1.8 percent from 2010 and 8.4 percent from the 2005 peak.

"With rising gas prices Californians get hit not only with the pump price, but also with higher sales tax payments on gas and higher costs for all consumer goods that are produced or transported using gasoline," Michelle Steel, vice chairman of the board, said in a written statement.